CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 14 March 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Carl-Magnus Hyltenius (Sweden)

GE.91-60542/9677A

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 587th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers today the representatives of Austria and Canada. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Ambassador Ceska.

Mr. CESKA (Austria): Mr. President, may I congratulate you on presiding over the Conference on Disarmament for the last four weeks? It is a particular pleasure for me to see you, a most skilful mediator, presiding over this body of the Conference in the same efficient manner as you did when chairing the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in the course of 1990.

Austria deeply welcomes the liberation of Kuwait and the re-establishment of its independence. Thus the grave violation of basic norms of international law caused by Iraqi aggression has been rectified. We owe this to the resolve of the international community, and in particular the Member States co-operating with Kuwait in liberating this country pursuant to Security Council resolution 678.

We attach great importance to humanitarian questions, among which the immediate return of detained Kuwaiti and third country nationals and the release of all prisoners of war under the auspices of the ICRC are paramount. By the same token, measures will urgently have to be undertaken to safeguard access of the Kuwaiti and Iraqi population to medical supplies and foodstuffs. We should be aware that urgent measures for further humanitarian relief will be required from the international community. The next step will be the rapid establishment of a formal cease-fire. During this second phase, serious consideration should also be given - in consultation with countries of the region - to a United Nations role in monitoring such a cease-fire. Austria has already declared her readiness to contribute to such a United Nations effort.

This is not only a crucial time for international politics, but also for the work of this Conference. In a world where military confrontation still seems to play a continuing and most regrettable role, reductions in military capabilities are of the highest priority. This holds especially true for regions where existing tensions have created a large potential for military conflicts. Therefore, the Conference on Disarmament is called upon to seek rapid and at the same time effective solutions for the items on its agenda. In particular, the early conclusion of work on a global convention banning all chemical weapons is of great importance. The knowledge of the existence of such arsenals and of their terrifying effectiveness was tragically refreshed during the Iraq-Iran war. Most recently, seven weeks of uncertainty about the imminent use of chemical weapons in the Gulf stressed most expressively the seriousness of the threat. Given this experience, an effective, comprehensive, non-discriminatory and universally adhered-to convention as a guarantee for avoiding such situations in the future is in our view a pressing need.

Let me now turn to the actual negotiations on a CW convention and to key issues not resolved thus far. In this context, the work programme which has been proposed for the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons seems to us a very

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constructive approach in as much as it deals with all related questions. It provides for detailed consideration under the three headings of security, verification and organization, and at the same time takes account of their close interrelationship. Therefore, in my remarks, I will follow this working agenda.

The future convention will only be considered successful if it is able to guarantee the security of all States parties. In this regard, the security perceptions of quite different international actors have to be taken into account. Regional security interests demand particular attention under the convention. This seems especially true when considering ways and means of ensuring signature and ratification by all States of a given region. Only if full participation at the regional level is ensured, can universal commitment to the convention be expected. Therefore, particular importance has to be attributed to early involvement by all States in the elaboration of the convention. In this context, it is encouraging to note that an increasing number of non-member States are participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The presence of an even greater number of States would create still more confidence and ensure the necessary global attention.

An important aspect of security relates to the question of the total destruction of all chemical weapons. In our view, adequate steps have to be undertaken to guarantee the feasibility of destruction of all chemical weapons within the envisaged time frame. To this end, transfer of necessary technology as well as regional arrangements for co-operation might be envisaged. But such activities should take place under strict international surveillance. Furthermore, all States should start to redefine their military doctrines in a way that leaves no place for the use of chemical weapons.

As to security concerns, the question of assistance in cases of the use or the threat of the use of chemical weapons is relevant. Adequate provisions should, on the one hand, guarantee rapid assistance in cases where there is an immediate need and, on the other hand, also ensure some form of political guidance for such circumstances.

The second "basket" deals with matters related to verification, which can be considered as the cornerstone of the future convention. Actually, a comprehensive discussion is focusing on solutions elaborated so far and on necessary changes. In our view, the future verification régime has to guarantee the necessary confidence in the convention by adequate and strict surveillance of compliance with the convention by all States. At the same time, the régime should be practical and flexible enough to deal with future developments such as production changes or new scientific knowledge. In this regard, we welcome the current efforts to streamline the overall verification regime while keeping the most important principle intact, i.e. verification of any relevant site anywhere at any time.

As a concrete contribution to these efforts, Austria has submitted working paper CD/1062 (CD/CW/WP.334) dated 21 February 1991, containing three studies related to the verification of non-production of chemical weapons. One study deals with materials monitoring in chemical production facilities, comparing relevant solutions in the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances with the actual approach of the

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"rolling text". The other two studies deal with the development of a computer program for accounts auditing during inspections of facilities, one giving the theoretical background, the other describing the details of a computer program elaborated for that purpose. My delegation would be interested in any comments, and stands ready to offer any further information.

Turning to the third area, entitled "organization", let me start by elaborating on the question of participation and decision-making within the Executive Council of the future control organization. In our view, adequate geographical distribution of membership should be ensured, while at the same time it might be envisaged that some countries may seek more frequent representation in this organ than others, taking into account their specific interests and responsibilities. The question needs to be considered of whether consensus requirements or veto rights have a place in such an organ.

In the light of the progress achieved in the current negotiations, which will hopefully make it possible to finalize the CW convention in the near future, let me reiterate the readiness of Austria to host the future organization.

The financing of the activities of the future organization will have to strike a balance between political aspects and the technical needs of the organization. In other words, contributions to a general budget encompassing the current costs of activities should be borne by all States parties; contributions to a specific budget for verification activities should be based upon special criteria while still ensuring some form of cost-sharing as an expression of a global commitment to verification.

Turning to the area of biological weapons, let me start by commenting on questions related to the Third Review Conference of the parties to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which is scheduled to take place in Geneva in September this year. As you are aware, Austria presided over the Second Review Conference and therefore continues to take a particular interest in all related matters.

The conclusion of the BW Convention in 1972 represented a major success in disarmament efforts and was facilitated by the fact that those weapons were then regarded as being of only limited military significance, and that no verification provisions were included in the treaty. The Second Review Conference succeeded in reaching agreement on a meeting of experts to elaborate confidence-building measures which were then adopted in the United Nations General Assembly. Twenty years after the conclusion of the treaty, however, some additional thought should be given to questions relating to institutional and technical as well as political and legal matters.

In the first place, it seems appropriate to state that national implementation of the Convention on a global level has been hampered by uncertainties relating to the scope of the Convention, and its relationship with peaceful economic activities or non-co-ordinated competences under national legislation. It might therefore prove useful to elaborate some form of general guidelines, taking into account the experience of some States parties in implementing the Convention.

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As the 1987 agreed confidence-building measures have, at least in our view, not been implemented in a satisfactory manner - given the limited number of countries responding and the wide variety of information provided - it would seem useful to elaborate stricter provisions regarding their application in order to avoid any misunderstandings. At the same time, a widening of the scope of such exchanges of information could be envisaged.

In order to deal with the question of verification, a committee could be established which would then survey compliance on a permanent basis, as the present interval of five years between review conferences seems too long for effective evaluation in this regard. Likewise, the establishment of a secretariat unit for preparing and servicing meetings of States parties as well as dealing with all kinds of exchanges of information might seem useful. In this context, let me mention that Austria is financing a UNIDIR study on issues and proposals that can be expected to play a role in the forthcoming Third Review Conference. This study is expected to be finalized and circulated by the end of March this year.

For more than 20 years the international community has been striving towards the conclusion of a treaty banning all nuclear explosions in all environments. One outcome of these continuing efforts was the partial nuclear test-ban Treaty concluded in 1963. Although limited in its scope, as underground testing has not been prohibited and no verification measures adopted, it is still a major arms control agreement. In order to advance to a CTBT, six countries initiated the holding of the so-called PTBT Amendment Conference in order to achieve a CTBT by way of amending the PTBT. This Conference allowed a comprehensive discussion of all related questions. We regret, however, that no consensus agreement could be reached and that voting on final language proved necessary.

Now that this item is back on the Conference's agenda, let me state that we welcome the consensus reached to continue the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a CTBT. In our understanding, this Committee may deal with questions regarding the scope of a CTBT as well as the general pattern of verification of such a treaty. Present efforts should concentrate on finalizing the technical part of the envisaged global seismological network. Furthermore, additional efforts seem necessary to guarantee its global application. To enhance participation by all regions in this endeavour, Austria has made technical co-operation arrangements with Peru in view of the fact that the Latin American continent needs to be more fully represented.

Before I conclude, a word on the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe and on confidence-building and security-building measures, which are currently taking place in Vienna. As you are aware, a treaty of far-reaching importance on conventional forces was signed by the heads of State and Government of the 22 participants on the occasion of the CSCE summit in Paris last November. We hope that the comprehensive and undisputed implementation of this important treaty will be assured in the near future. The negotiations on confidence-building and security-building measures also produced a significant document before the Paris summit, which my delegation had the honour to forward to the Conference on Disarmament as document CD/1070.

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The Paris summit marked the beginning of a new era in European co-operation. Important steps were taken towards a system of co-operative security. A framework for political consultation, institutional arrangements - in particular the Conflict Prevention Centre set up in Vienna - as well as further negotiations on security matters between all CSCE participating States should significantly contribute to stability and security on the European continent.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Mr. Robertson.

Mr. ROBERTSON (Canada): My intervention today will be very brief since its purpose is only to table some documents. May I first, however, offer you our congratulations for the very effective job you have done during this past month in conducting and advancing the work of the CD?

In our delegation we have been encouraged over the years by the favourable reactions of other delegations to the distribution of our compendium of statements and working papers on outer space. In the hope that this will continue to prove useful to the members of the Conference, and in particular to those participating in the Ad Hoc Committee on this item, the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of the Canadian Department of External Affairs has produced a further volume covering the 1990 session of the CD and of the Ad Hoc Committee. This has been assigned the number CD/1073 and will shortly be distributed to delegations. I hope that it may contribute in a positive way, to advancing our work on this important subject.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other member wish to take the floor?

As is the practice in the Conference, the secretariat has circulated today the timetable of meetings to be held next week by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. The timetable is, as usual, only indicative and subject to change, if necessary. If there is no objection I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As agreed by the Conference in the timetable of meetings for the current week, we shall hold an informal meeting devoted to the substance of agenda item 3 immediately after this plenary meeting.

As I have no other business for today, I should like now to make my concluding statement as President.

When taking up the presidency of the Conference nearly four weeks ago I was pleased to note that most of the procedural decisions required for setting the work in motion had already been taken. There was only one outstanding matter of that nature, namely the issue of an appropriate organizational arrangement for dealing with agenda item 8, entitled "Comprehensive programme

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of disarmament". Since then Ambassador Marín Bosch of Mexico has been appointed to deal with this question. He is now in the process of consulting on the matter.

You will recall that, at the last plenary meeting, Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan referred to the bilateral consultations that he undertook in order to determine whether there was common ground for addressing certain issues relating to the question of the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. As a result of the recommendation by Ambassador Kamal, the Conference has decided to hold an informal open-ended consultation to consider this matter on Tuesday, 19 March.

In accordance with the decision taken by the Conference, informal meetings have been held on agenda items 2 and 3, at which a number of delegations participated in an extensive exchange of views.

In my opening statement I announced my intention to actively pursue the question of expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. On that occasion I also emphasized that this question has been pending for many years now and expressed the view that it was high time that a determined effort was made to find a solution. In my opinion it is not reasonable to keep countries which have demonstrated their interest and competence waiting year after year. I have made a determined effort to see as many heads of delegation as possible in the limited time available to me. It has not been possible to reach everyone, so I can only share with you my impressions and preliminary conclusions on the basis of an extensive but not yet complete round of informal private consultations.

I am pleased to report, however, that there is widespread sympathy for the view that a determined effort should now be made, and that a large number of members have indicated that they are willing to look at a formula that would make it possible to enlarge the membership from the present figure of 39 to 44. As you recall, the CD in 1983 agreed to an expansion by not more than four States. This would have taken us up to the figure of 44. In the new situation that has arisen since the number of members decreased to 39, it would thus be possible to add five new States without exceeding the maximum number that was envisaged as early as 1983, eight years ago. It appears from my consultations tha some delegations would have difficulties, at least at this stage, in envisaging a larger number. They have, together with others, also emphasized the importance of keeping the membership of the Conference limited in order to ensure that it remains an effective negotiating body. A few delegations have stated that they consider that the present number of 39 is adequate. While some delegations may wish for a larger expansion, no delegation has so far excluded expansion up to 44, provided that an appropriate formula can be agreed.

In order to explore whether agreement on an appropriate new formula could emerge, the question of the distribution of new members between regions has been tentatively discussed. Although I was encouraged by the comments and suggestions, it is too early to draw any precise conclusions. This matter requires further consultations. Several delegations have emphasized the fact

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that a decision to enlarge the membership requires consensus on all new members, an important factor that will have to be taken into account in the nomination process in due course.

It goes without saying that a concrete decision on this matter requires that all the present members of the Conference be consulted. As I have already mentioned, I have made an effort to see as many colleagues as possible, but it has not been possible in the limited time available to me to reach everyone. Consultations must therefore continue. The indications given by individual heads of delegation have so far been encouraging.

Before concluding this statement I should like to express my sincere thanks to the group co-ordinators and to all delegations for their co-operation during the Swedish presidency. I am also most grateful to Ambassador Komatina, the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to Ambassador Berasategui, the Deputy Secretary-General. Their advice and the skill with which they perform their responsible tasks have been of great value to me. I also wish to thank all other members of the secretariat for their support and their invaluable contribution to the good functioning of this important Conference. Last but not least I should like to convey my best wishes to my successor as President, Ambassador Serguei Batsanov of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. His professional experience and competence are well known to the Conference, and I am sure that he will guide its work in a very effective and productive manner.

That concludes my statement. I shall now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 21 March, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.